

SURGE

Written by

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Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change.

- Mary Shelley, Frankenstein

FADE IN:

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A brilliant flash of lightning illuminates an old window - followed by a violent thunderclap.

Beneath a flickering light, AMANDA (late 20's), pretty, long raven hair, wearing a medieval dress, flinches and drops a steak knife - which thunks into the butcher block beside a cantaloupe.

AMANDA
(laughs nervously)
Holy crap, that was close.

MICHAEL (early 30's), ruggedly handsome, wearing a frilly musketeer outfit, comes up behind Amanda, wraps his arms around her waist, and plants a firm kiss on her cheek.

Across the kitchen, DINA, the CAT, hops up onto the counter, and sniffs a glowing jack-o-lantern.

MICHAEL
Your costume is driving me crazy.
All the guys at the party were
leering at you... some of the girls
were leering at you.

AMANDA
Good thing I had a Musketeer at my
side.

MICHAEL
You think anyone noticed we're from
different centuries?

Amanda glances uneasily out the window at a lightning flash, her face cringing in anticipation of the thunderclap.

AMANDA
I like your boss's wife. She
invited me to her studio to paint
lobsters on shards of driftwood.

MICHAEL

You know, he's building another
condo complex, only twenty miles
south of town. One hundred units.
I'd probably make as much as I
would out in Colorado.

(beat)

You could keep your job at the
library. We could have a
traditional wedding in that big
white church on Main Street.

Amanda lets out a heavy sigh.

Michael gives her a squeeze, kisses her neck.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

This is a great town, Amanda.
Beautiful beach. Good schools. Good
hospital. Not too far from Boston.
Must have been a great place to
grow up.

(beat)

I grew up in Millinocket Maine,
next to a freaking paper mill. The
sulfur stench was so bad... my
entire childhood smelled like one
big rotten-egg-fart.

AMANDA

There's nothing for me here.

She turns to face him.

MICHAEL

That's not true. You have-

She places two fingers on his lips.

AMANDA

Shhh...

Looking deeply into his eyes, she unbuttons his frilly shirt.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Don't want a big church wedding.

She spreads open his shirt, kisses his chest, slides her hand
down the front of his trousers.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I'd be happier in that cozy
mountain cabin.

She kisses him tenderly on the lips.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Tell me about the ranch.

Michael smiles, brings up her free hand to kiss her fingers, her diamond engagement ring sparkling.

MICHAEL

(cowboy voice)

Silver Creek Ranch. Nestled in a lush valley at the foot of the Rockies. When you gaze up at the mountain range for the first time, it's so big, so majestic, hard to get your head around it.

AMANDA

Tell me about the horses.

MICHAEL

(cowboy voice)

If you get up at the crack of dawn, sit on the front porch with your coffee, you might catch a herd of wild mustangs galloping across the prairie.

(beat)

I'm gonna git you a horse. An easygoing palomino, with a long blond mane you can braid. The ranch owner's granddaughter, Jessie - sweet kid - she'll take you out on the trails, show you the ropes.

AMANDA

Can I wear a cowboy hat?

MICHAEL

(cowboy voice)

Cowboy hats are mandatory.

AMANDA

And we'll git an old mutt? A yellow lab mix, who gets along with Dina?

MICHAEL

(cowboy voice)

Sure. We'll mosey on down to the local pet rescue, pick out a pooch.

AMANDA

And you won't make me wait too long... for the baby?

MICHAEL

(voice serious)

We'll start trying as soon as we elope. On our wedding night.

Amanda grips him hard, making him wince.

AMANDA

I want you. Right now. On the butcher block.

A monstrous lightning flash illuminates the window - the thunderclap rattles the old windowpanes and sends Dina skittering into the pantry.

Michael pulls Amanda's hand from his trousers.

MICHAEL

Now that was a close one.

He goes over and peers out the dark window.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I bet it struck the weathervane on the barn across the street.

Staying behind the butcher block, Amanda folds her arms protectively across her chest.

AMANDA

Don't go out there.

Michael turns to her, arches an eyebrow.

MICHAEL

Wasn't planning on it.

The antique wall phone erupts with a shrill ring, making Amanda jump.

Michael glances at the ringing phone, then turns back to the dark window.

Thunder rumbles angrily. The sky suddenly unleashes a torrential downpour that streams down the window in a thick sheet.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(peering out the window)

Should've fixed that roof leak in the mud room. Better get a bucket in there.

Amanda lifts the phone's earpiece off the hook and hesitantly answers the phone.

AMANDA

Hello... Hello... I'm sorry, you're breaking up... Who is this?

MICHAEL

(peering out the window)
Amanda, babe, you don't want to be on that old landline during a-

A blinding flash consumes the kitchen - the deafening thunderclap sends Michael ducking for cover.

Bewildered, static bristling his hair, Michael cautiously pushes himself to his feet.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Holy shit.

He turns to the butcher block.

Amanda is gone. A thin trail of smoke drifts from the wall phone's dangling earpiece.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Amanda?

He rushes across the kitchen.

He finds Amanda lying facedown behind the butcher block, her right arm bent awkwardly behind her back. A grey haze lingers above her tousled hair.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - SHORT WHILE LATER

Sirens flash outside the window.

Two PARAMEDICS come up behind Michael with their gear as Michael compresses Amanda's chest, sweat dripping off his nose.

MICHAEL

(under his breath)
Twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight... Come on...
Come on...

Amanda's head lolls to one side, face pale, eyes glassy, foaming at the mouth, a long reddened welt on the right side of her face.

A thin trail of blood trickles from her right ear.

One of the paramedics lays a firm hand on Michael's shoulder.

Michael looks up, eyes wide and frantic, then slowly backs away from Amanda's lifeless body.

He slumps on the floor against the wall, watches the two paramedics get to work attaching EKG electrodes and starting an IV.

A fireman passes in front of him, searching for smoke and flames.

The EKG lets out a chilling flatline tone.

INT. HOSPITAL - SMALL FAMILY WAITING ROOM - LATER

Michael sits alone on a coffee-stained couch, glaring at the large seascape watercolor on the opposite wall.

DOCTOR CRAIG (40's), wearing Halloween-themed scrubs, stops just outside the open door to read a text.

Stuffing his phone in his pocket, he steps into the room, his gaze preoccupied.

Michael jumps up, appearing anxious, absolutely petrified of what he's about to say.

The Doctor gives Michael a tight smile and a nod.

DOCTOR CRAIG

Mister Drake. I'm Doctor Craig. I came by to give you an update on Amanda - excuse me.

He pauses for an excruciating moment to check another text.

DOCTOR CRAIG (CONT'D)

So... Amanda. We were able to get her heart beating normally.

Michael lets out a relieved sigh. Knees wobbly, he sits back down on the couch.

The Doctor pauses to punch in a text, giving Michael a few moments to gather himself.

DOCTOR CRAIG (CONT'D)

There was, um, no signs of infarction... no obvious damage to the heart muscle.

(MORE)

DOCTOR CRAIG (CONT'D)

She does have significant lightning
flowering - that would be the red
marks branching down her neck...
which is something you'd expect to
see with a direct lightning strike.

(beat)

According to the EMS report, you
said she was talking on a landline
when the lightning struck?

MICHAEL

It's an antique phone. Got an old
metal conduit running into it.

(beat)

Wouldn't be surprised if the
fucking deathtrap is wired to a
lightning rod.

DOCTOR CRAIG

Interesting.

He pauses to consider this, biting his lip, brow furrowing.

DOCTOR CRAIG (CONT'D)

Well, regardless, the burns on the
side of her face will heal. She did
rupture her right eardrum. The ear,
nose, and throat specialist is
taking a look at her right now-

MICHAEL

What about the CT scan?

DOCTOR CRAIG

Oh, of course... I spoke on the
phone with the neurologist, Doctor
Hammond, who read her scan.

(beat)

Um... aside from a question of some
slight swelling along her right
temporal lobe - that's the area on
the side of the head above the
ear...

(he touches the area)

...he didn't see any obvious trauma
or bleeding.

(beat)

It would appear, for lack of a
better phrase, the lightning surge
just nicked her.

MICHAEL

Nicked her? It stopped her fucking
heart.

DOCTOR CRAIG

Well, sometimes, even with an indirect lightning discharge, the intense current flowing around the body can generate a large electromagnetic pulse... it can induce electrical surges within the pacemaker of the heart, causing cardiac arrest.

MICHAEL

So there's no brain damage.

DOCTOR CRAIG

None that we can see. Although electrical injuries can be... tricky. The neurologist will discuss this with you in more detail. He should be here within the hour. For the time being, our main concern is she might still develop some brain swelling. So the plan is to keep her sedated and intubated, and transfer her up to the ICU.

INT. HOSPITAL - ICU ROOM - LATER

When Michael enters Amanda's private, dimly lit, ICU room, the NEUROLOGIST, DOCTOR HAMMOND (60's), wearing a crisp black suit, is at Amanda's bedside shining a penlight into her eyes.

His old-fashioned country doctor's satchel sits on the end of the bed.

Amanda lies unconscious, a breathing tube in her mouth, the respirator huffing softly.

Michael pauses just inside the doorway, scanning the complicated array of monitors and IVs.

Doctor Hammond runs the penlight over the welt on the right side of Amanda's face, then lifts her johnny collar to examine the strange, fern-like, lightning-scorch markings running down her shoulder and breast.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

(murmurs)

Lichtenberg figures.

MICHAEL

Excuse me?

Doctor Hammond looks up at Michael, quizzically examines his ridiculous Musketeer costume for a long moment.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

The branching pattern along her neck and torso. They're also called lightning flowers. They're created when a high voltage electrical discharge passes along the surface of insulating materials.

Michael goes over to Amanda's bedside, looks down at her, his face turning pale.

DOCTOR HAMMOND (CONT'D)

They're caused by the rupture of capillaries beneath the skin.

He brushes a stray hair from her face, lifts her hand and begins manipulating her fingers.

DOCTOR HAMMOND (CONT'D)

They should disappear within four or five days. I'm Doctor Hammond. You are Michael, the spouse, I presume.

MICHAEL

Fiancé.

Doctor Hammond lifts Amanda's other hand and begins manipulating the fingers.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

I've treated quite a few electrical injuries. Mostly electricians and linemen, work-related accidents. Lightning strikes, however, are a unique occurrence.

He carefully rests Amanda's hand on her belly, then meets Michael's anxious gaze, offering a small smile.

DOCTOR HAMMOND (CONT'D)

Believe it or not, with a lightning strike, thermal burns are often not a major concern. The energy from the strike is usually too brief to greatly heat up and damage the tissues.

MICHAEL

So what is the major concern?

DOCTOR HAMMOND

Sometimes, the underlying nerves and muscles may be damaged by the high voltage, producing holes in their cell membranes in a process called electroporation.

MICHAEL

What the hell does that mean?

He offers Michael another small smile.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

No sense worrying about hypotheticals. Her CT scan was unremarkable. And she appears neurologically intact. I remain cautiously optimistic she'll make a good recovery.

(beat)

But, for the next twenty-four hours, she'll be at increased risk for cerebral edema and seizures.

(beat)

I've ordered a follow-up CT scan for tomorrow morning. If everything looks good and she's doing well, sometime tomorrow afternoon, we'll remove the breathing tube and wake her up.

INT. HOSPITAL - ICU WAITING ROOM - MORNING

Michael sits alone on the couch, staring out the overcast window, his eyes ringed in dark circles.

A FEMALE ICU NURSE (50's), pokes her head into the room and gives Michael a big smile.

ICU NURSE

Amanda's awake. She pulled out her breathing tube on the way back from her CT scan. I spoke with Doctor Hammond. He said the CT scan looked good and she doesn't need to be re-intubated.

She glances up at the wall clock.

ICU NURSE (CONT'D)

Just give me ten minutes to get her situated, and I'll bring you in to see her.

INT. HOSPITAL - ICU ROOM - LATER

Michael steps hesitantly into the room.

At Amanda's bedside, the ICU Nurse holds a small cup of water with a straw to her lips.

Amanda, her eyes clenched tightly, her face locked in a painful grimace, sips cautiously, as if the water's scalding hot.

ICU NURSE

(softly)

Hello, Michael. Amanda's still a bit drowsy. And, not surprisingly, she has quite the headache.

She gently pries the cup of water from Amanda's hands.

ICU NURSE (CONT'D)

(softly)

Amanda, honey, I want you to lay your head back and rest. I'm going to step out for a minute and get a bag of IV Tylenol for that headache.

The ICU Nurse leaves the room, giving Michael a warm smile as she passes him.

Amanda lies back in bed, eyes closed, grimacing in pain.

Michael walks over to her, scans the burn welt on the side of her face, the crusted blood in her ear canal, and the lightning-flower marks running down her neck.

He opens his mouth to speak, but pauses, afraid to disturb her.

Somewhere on the unit a MAN lets out an urgent shout.

Sneakers smack across the floor.

A harsh, buzzing alarm sounds.

The intercom erupts with an automated CODE RED announcement.

CODE RED ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

(flat, robotic)

Code Red ICU... Code Red ICU...
Code Red ICU...

Michael turns and sees a NURSE wheel a rattling code cart past the open door.

When Michael turns back to Amanda, she's glaring at him strangely, her right eye severely bloodshot.

MICHAEL

Amanda?

She closes her eyes tightly for a moment... opens them and squints at his face.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Amanda, it's me, Michael.

She finally recognizes him, closes her eyes and lets out a heavy sigh.

AMANDA

(hoarsely)

Michael...

He lays his hand on her right arm - she quickly pulls her hand away, hissing in pain.

MICHAEL

Sorry... How are you doing, babe?

AMANDA

(hoarsely, eyes closed)

Head hurts... Everything's too bright.

MICHAEL

The nurse just went to get a bag of IV Tylenol.

He glances out the door.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

She should be right back.

AMANDA

(hoarsely, eyes closed)

It's like there's a hornet's nest... buzzing inside my head.

INT. HOSPITAL - ICU ROOM - LATER

Michael steps into the room.

At Amanda's bedside, Doctor Hammond shines a penlight into her eyes.

Face cringing in pain, breathing heavily, Amanda grips the bedrail with her left hand, knuckles blanching white.

MICHAEL
How's her vision?

DOCTOR HAMMOND
(absently)
Her vision?

MICHAEL
She was having trouble recognizing
me earlier.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
Her eyes appear normal.

The Doctor stuffs the penlight into his breast pocket, then pulls out a business card, and holds it up twelve inches from Amanda's face.

DOCTOR HAMMOND (CONT'D)
Can you read this card for me,
Amanda?

Amanda lets out an annoyed huff and squints at the card.

AMANDA
Doctor Gregory Hammond. Department
of Neurology. Fairfield Hospital.
Twenty-one Main Street, Fairfield
Massachusetts.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
Very good.

He stuffs the card back into his breast pocket, then reaches down and gently takes hold of Amanda's right hand, making her flinch and hiss in pain.

He pauses for a few moments, allowing her to catch her breath, then starts carefully manipulating her fingers.

DOCTOR HAMMOND (CONT'D)
Do you have any pain, numbness, or
tingling along the right side of
your body, down your leg, or in
your toes?

AMANDA
Just the arm and hand.

She hisses through clenched teeth, glares up at the Doctor like she's about ready to punch him in the face.

The Doctor gently lays her hand down.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

Are you experiencing any bladder incontinence since they removed the catheter?

AMANDA

No.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

Have you moved your bowels today?

AMANDA

As soon as I get some fucking privacy.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

Well, the good news is that, aside from the headache, the pain appears to be isolated to the right arm and hand.

(beat)

The bad news is the pain may take some time to resolve. You suffered a significant jolt to your nervous system, Amanda.

(beat)

I'm hesitant to start you on narcotic pain medications and further compromise your mental status, but I am going to start you on a low dose anticonvulsant to protect you from any residual seizures.

Amanda curls her right arm into her body, her annoyed expression softening with a touch of fear.

AMANDA

Was I having seizures?

DOCTOR HAMMOND

No, it does not appear that you suffered any seizures. However, the recent electrical trauma to your brain may have, in the short term, lowered your seizure threshold. So-

AMANDA

I'll take Tylenol. That's it. And I want to go home tonight.

The Doctor smiles, looks into her eyes for a long moment.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
(firmly, holding her gaze)
Tomorrow.

After another long moment, Amanda rolls her eyes and looks away.

AMANDA
Fine. But if I'm not discharged by
noon, I'm leaving AMA.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
We have a deal.

The Doctor grabs his satchel off the bedside tray, then turns to Michael.

DOCTOR HAMMOND (CONT'D)
I'd like to see Amanda in my office
in two days.

Michael nods obediently.

EXT. HOME - MORNING

As soon as the Taxi stops in the driveway, Amanda gets out and, cradling her right arm, goes straight into the house, leaving both the car and front doors wide-open.

INT. HOME - FRONT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Holding a stack of mail, Michael picks up Amanda's jacket off the floor.

He looks up the darkened stairway, hears a door creak shut.

Dina hisses and scampers down the stairs.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Michael comes into the kitchen, drops the mail on the butcher block.

He notices the wires to the antique wall phone have been cut and capped with shiny new wire nuts.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - SHORT WHILE LATER

Michael creaks open the bedroom door, sees Amanda sleeping in bed, the blankets pulled over her head.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - LATER

Michael sits at the kitchen table, sipping coffee and unenthusiastically browsing architectural plans.

Through the archway to the living room he sees Amanda sit on the couch, protectively curling her right arm against her body.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - SHORT WHILE LATER

Michael sits on the couch beside Amanda, sets a glass of water and two pills on the coffee table.

Amanda is squinting at the collection of family photos on the wall.

MICHAEL

How you feeling, babe?

AMANDA

Like shit.

She glances down at the pills, winces, re-adjusts her right arm, then resumes squinting at the photographs.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Who's that lady in the middle...
wearing the ACDC T-shirt?

Michael looks at the photo.

MICHAEL

Isn't that your Aunt Loretta? The
crazy biker chick from New
Hampshire?

(turns to her)

You sure your eyes are okay?

AMANDA

Everything's too harsh... like
staring at the sun.

MICHAEL

Why don't you take the Tylenol.

He reaches over to touch her arm - but catches himself.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I think I should go pick up that
anti-seizure med Doctor Hammond
prescribed. Nurse said it might
help with the pain.

AMANDA

(squinting at the photo)
I spent an entire summer at her house. She used to let me stay up late... watching re-runs of The Brady Bunch on a small black-and-white TV.

MICHAEL

Are you hungry? I could make you some soup, toast, I think we have-

AMANDA

Have you seen Dina?

She rubs her temple, reaches for a pill.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I heard her meow, but she won't come.

She pauses to suspiciously eye the pill.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Think she's upstairs in the guest room. Hiding under the bed.

(beat)

Think she's mad at me... or afraid.

MICHAEL

Amanda, look at me.

She turns to him, winces, adjusts her right arm.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I love you.

AMANDA

(strained smile)

I love you too... Michael.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Windswept rain hammers the windows.

Michael sleeps alone in bed.

A shrill scream somewhere downstairs jerks Michael awake.

Groggy, disoriented, he searches the bed for Amanda.

Scrambling out of bed, he rushes out of the bedroom.

INT. HOME - STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Michael hears glass shatter as he hurries down the stairs.

Dina bolts past the stairway landing.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Michael rushes into the kitchen.

Amanda stands in front of the full-length coat mirror in her nightgown, clutching a meat cleaver in her left hand, her right hand curled protectively against her body.

She has smashed the mirror dead center, the jagged shards of glass perched precariously inside the frame.

MICHAEL

Amanda!

He rushes over to her - grabs her arm as she raises the cleaver for another mirror chop.

Amanda glares at her distorted reflection in the mirror.

AMANDA

Don't fucking touch me!

MICHAEL

(calm voice)

Amanda, it's me, Michael.

He tries to carefully pry the cleaver from her hand.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You're sleepwalking, Amanda. Give me the cleaver.

She turns to him, her eyes wide and frightened.

AMANDA

Michael?

MICHAEL

I'm right here, babe. Let go of the cleaver. You were sleepwalking.

She blinks hard, searches his face.

After a long moment, she lets out a relieved sigh.

AMANDA

Michael...

He takes the cleaver from her, then carefully sets it on the butcher block.

MICHAEL
You had a bad dream. Everything's
okay. You're safe.

She hugs him tightly, breaking into sobs.

AMANDA
Oh, Michael...

MICHAEL
Got you babe.

AMANDA
The hornets... they're crawling
down my arm... stinging me.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - LATER

Amanda lies on the bed, cradling her right arm, sobbing quietly.

Michael sits beside her, gently stroking her hair.

MICHAEL
I'm taking you back to the
hospital.

AMANDA
(murmurs)
No...

MICHAEL
You don't have to suffer like this,
Amanda.

AMANDA
Do you still love me?

MICHAEL
Of course.

AMANDA
Don't make me go back to the
hospital.

MICHAEL
Tell you what, I think I have an
old bottle of Percocet from my knee
surgery. Let's give that a try.

AMANDA
(murmurs)
No, Michael.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - SHORT WHILE LATER

Michael searches the cabinet above the fridge, pulling out miscellaneous junk.

MICHAEL
Where the fuck are you?

He pulls out a few pill bottles.

In the back corner of the cabinet he finds one labeled PERCOCET.

He gives it a shake. Let's out a relieved sigh.

Over in the pantry Dina lets out an angry hiss.

Her claws scramble up onto a shelve... clinking and clanking between glass dish-ware.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - SHORT WHILE LATER

Michael sits on the bed beside Amanda. He hands her a glass of water.

Tears streaming down her face, Amanda peers down at the two pills in her open palm.

Michael rubs her back.

Amanda peers down at the pills, hesitant to take them.

AMANDA
Michael... I can't-

MICHAEL
It's okay, babe.

He gently wipes the tears from her cheeks.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I'm right here. I'm going to take care of you.

AMANDA
(peering down at the pills, murmurs)
Never let me go.

She slowly pushes the pills through her lips, then swallows them with a sip of water.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - LATER

Michael carefully removes the last shard of glass from the shattered mirror and drops it in a trash barrel.

After closing the broom closet, he notices the antique wall phone earpiece is dangling.

He goes over, picks up the earpiece, and sets it back on the hook.

Dina hisses and jumps down off the fridge, making Michael jump back, slam into the butcher block, and tumble to the floor.

MICHAEL(O.S.)
Fucking cat!

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Amanda sits on the couch, appearing drowsy.

She pushes a pill through her lips, swallows it with a sip of water, then sets the glass on the coffee table beside the Percocet bottle.

Michael comes in and sits beside her.

He lifts the Percocet bottle and gives it a shake.

Dina lets out a anxious meow, skitters through the kitchen.

MICHAEL
(glancing at the kitchen)
Think the cat caught a jolt of that lightning strike.

He turns to Amanda.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
How'd you sleep?

AMANDA
(slurring slightly)
Dreamed I was back in Chatham.

MICHAEL
Back in Chatham?

AMANDA

(slurring slightly)

When I was little, we used to take weekend trips to my grandmother's beach cottage. Me and my mom...

(beat)

Before she got remarried.

She nods at a photo on the wall.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

(slurring slightly)

That's us on the beach.

MICHAEL

Must have been a special time.

AMANDA

(slurring slightly)

It was nice.

(beat)

It was nice in the dream too... until the storm rolled in... and a lightning bolt blew my mom's head off.

MICHAEL

Oh, man, that sucks.

She turns her drowsy gaze to the overcast window.

AMANDA

(slurring slightly)

Do they have bad lightning storms in Colorado?

MICHAEL

Not going to lie to you, they have some doozies, especially in the mountains... but you can see them coming from miles away, and they pass over quick.

(beat)

On the bright side - pun intended - the place gets like three hundred days of sunshine a year.

AMANDA

(slurring slightly)

I miss the sun.

MICHAEL

Down in the valley, spring comes much earlier out there.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Place just explodes with
wildflowers, all different colors.
Absolutely beautiful.

AMANDA

(slurring slightly)
Was she beautiful?

Michael gives her a confused look.

MICHAEL

Was who beautiful?

AMANDA

(slurring slightly)
That girl you were with... when you
lived at the ranch.

MICHAEL

Wasn't with anyone.
(beat)
Think I mentioned I dated this
Native American chick for a bit...
until she got busted for
trafficking crystal meth.

AMANDA

(slurring slightly)
So you dumped her?

MICHAEL

(smiles reassuringly)
Dropped her like a hot potato...
drizzled in sulfuric acid.

She turns to him, her eyes on the verge of tears.

AMANDA

(slurring slightly)
Are you going to dump me, Michael?

Michael gives her a strange look.

MICHAEL

No...

She rubs her eyes, offers a sheepish, apologetic smile.

AMANDA

(slurring slightly)
Sorry. I trust you. I can't wait to
go to Colorado... be your wife.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - EVENING

Amanda, sitting on the edge of the bed, sets the empty Percocet bottle on the bedside table next to a flickering candle.

She stares at the bottle for a long moment, then crawls over to Michael, and lays her head on his chest.

The radio plays a romantic ballad such as "All of Me" by John Legend.

Michael is on the phone.

MICHAEL

Actually, sir, we're in good shape.
My Foreman, Chucky, has been
staying late, tying up loose ends.

(listening)

About two weeks... We'll do a
walkthrough, sit down and put
together a final punch list.

(listening)

Thank you sir... I appreciate it.

(listening)

She's doing much better.

He gives Amanda's bottom a light pat.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Well, thank you, sir. I'll, um,
send your wife's regards.

Michael sets the phone on the bedside table, then kisses Amanda's head.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

How you doing?

Amanda interlocks the fingers of her left hand with his, her diamond engagement ring sparkling in the soft candlelight.

AMANDA

I love this song.

MICHAEL

Should hope so. It was playing when
I asked you to marry me.

AMANDA

What's the name again?

MICHAEL

You forgot the name of our
engagement song?

She kisses his chest, inhales deeply.

AMANDA

Mmm... could never forget the way
you smell.

Michael kisses her head, gives her a squeeze.

MICHAEL

Have you thought about a wedding
song?

AMANDA

You mean for the car ride back from
the Justice of the Peace?

MICHAEL

At the southern edge of the ranch
there's a little stone chapel.
Built in the late eighteen
hundreds. I was thinking we could
get married there. Maybe,
afterward, take a few pictures out
front. Something to show the kids.

AMANDA

That does sound romantic. But only
if the stones are good and mossy. I
like my little stone chapels
properly aged.

MICHAEL

I'll make sure they hose it down
regularly. Keep it nice and dank to
promote optimal mossiness.

AMANDA

But, who's going to marry us?

MICHAEL

Well, it just so happens the ranch
owner's dad, Mack Calhoun, is a
certified reverend.

AMANDA

A certified reverend?

MICHAEL

Baptist or something. He's like
ninety-years-old.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

One of those old school cowboys.
Skin like leather. Hand rolls his
own cigarettes. Rides an old
mustang named Dusty. Even carries
an antique Colt Forty-five in a
silver studded holster.

AMANDA

Gun might come in handy. In case
you get cold feet and try to leave
me at the altar.

MICHAEL

So, you'll do the chapel?

AMANDA

Sure, but no guests. Just you and
me... and the old school cowboy
reverend with the gun.

Michael gives her head another kiss.

MICHAEL

"All of Me." That's the name of the
song.

AMANDA

(closes her eyes, dreamy
voice)

We were dancing on the restaurant
veranda, overlooking the moonlit
bay. Paper lanterns hung from the
awning, bathing everything in a
heavenly glow.

(beat)

I was holding you so tight, my head
on your chest, lost in the music,
the smell of you, when the music
suddenly stopped and the entire
place went quiet.

(beat)

Then, with everyone watching, you
went down on one knee, looked up
into my eyes, held out this
beautiful diamond ring, and said...

(choking up)

"Will you marry me, Amanda?"

She pauses for a few moments to gather herself.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Time stopped... everyone was
watching...

(beat)

(MORE)

AMANDA (CONT'D)

...then I said "yes," and the place
erupted with applause.

Michael runs his finger over the engagement ring.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

No one has ever made me feel that
special.

(beat)

Best night of my life.

INT. DOCTOR HAMMOND'S WAITING ROOM - MORNING

Amanda and Michael sit in the waiting room.

There's one other patient in the room; an ELDERLY MAN (80's),
slumped in a wheel chair, one side of his face drooping, one
arm limp. He's obviously suffered a stroke.

His dotting, ELDERLY WIFE (80's), reaches over to dab his
drooling mouth.

Amanda appears very irritable, wincing and guarding her right
arm. She's obviously in a lot of pain.

The last of the Percocet obviously wore off hours ago.

A frazzled, burnt-out-looking MOTHER (40's), walks in,
practically dragging along her alarmingly gaunt SON (17). He
wears a baseball cap, his shirt covered in food stains, his
ataxic gait and spacey gaze indicating he has suffered some
sort of brain injury.

After planting him in the chair directly across from Amanda,
the Mother starts digging through a grungy, bloated backpack.

The Son begins rocking back and forth in his chair, his
spacey eyes buzzing with nervous energy.

Sucking in his hollow cheeks, he yanks off his baseball cap
to scratch the grotesque scar running along the side of his
shaved head.

Scratching his scar, rocking back and forth, he stares up at
the ceiling for a long moment, watching a fly crawl across
the white tiles, then suddenly drops his spacey, wild eyes to
Amanda.

TEENAGE SON

(bellows in an aggressive,
gravelly voice)

Youuu...

Amanda sneers back at him, more annoyed than threatened.

AMANDA
(mouths)
What?

TEENAGE SON
(eyes popping open
accusingly)
Youuu...

The frazzled Mother quickly pulls a tablet from the backpack, and sticks it in the boy's face. It's playing a children's video, such as Elmo's World.

TEENAGE SON (CONT'D)
Ha!

He grabs the tablet with both hands, holds it up an inch from his face, completely enthralled.

Amanda lets out an impatient huff, winces and rubs her right temple.

An Asian MEDICAL ASSISTANT (20's), emerges from the exam room and scans the waiting room.

MEDICAL ASSISTANT
(thick accent)
Amanda Wabreck?

AMANDA
(shoots back, irritated)
It's Labreck.

Amanda pushes herself to her feet.

Cradling her right arm, not waiting for Michael, she walks toward the exam room.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
(under her breath)
Let's get this freak show on the road.

INT. DOCTOR HAMMOND'S EXAM ROOM - LATER

Amanda, wearing a johnny, sits on the examination table, appearing anxious and irritable.

Doctor Hammond finishes shining a penlight into Amanda's eyes, then stuffs the penlight into his breast pocket.

Michael sits in the corner, watching expectantly.

The Doctor pulls out an otoscope and moves around to Amanda's right side.

Amanda goes rigid, scoots a few feet to the left.

AMANDA

What do you think you're going to do with that?

DOCTOR HAMMOND

(disarming smile)

I'm going to examine your ear.

AMANDA

No fucking way are you sticking that thing in my ear.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

How about I just hold it close and take a quick peek. I promise I won't stick it in.

AMANDA

(under her breath)

That's what they all say.

Ignoring the off-color comment, the Doctor moves close and begins carefully examining Amanda's ear.

Amanda goes rigid.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

Have you noticed any more drainage from this ear? Bloody, yellow, green, or even clear drainage?

AMANDA

No.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

Do you have a follow-up appointment with the ear, nose, and throat specialist?

MICHAEL

We do. It's written on the hospital discharge paperwork. Think it's next Tuesday.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

How's your hearing in this ear, Amanda?

AMANDA
 Deaf as a doorknob.
 (beat)
 But I refuse to let my new
 disability hold me back. Deaf
 people can do anything hearing
 people can... except hear.

The Doctor puts the otoscope away, then takes a step back and
 stares at Amanda for a long moment.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
 (self conscious, annoyed)
 What?

DOCTOR HAMMOND
 I'm going to have you stand up now,
 and walk forward, then backward,
 heel to toe.

Amanda lets out an annoyed snort and slips off the table.

Cradling her right arm, wincing in pain, she performs the
 test.

AMANDA
 (drunken slur)
 How'm I doin, Ocifer.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
 You're doing very well, Amanda.

AMANDA
 (dramatic Shakespearean
 accent)
 That which hath made them drunk
 hath made me bold.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
 (slightly amused)
 Lady Macbeth.

Amanda stops, turns to Michael.

AMANDA
 (dramatic Shakespearean
 accent)
 Before you tumbled me, you promised
 me to wed.

Appearing confused, Michael looks at the Doctor.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
(to Michael)
Ophelia.
(then smiles at Amanda)
From Hamlet.

Amanda gets back up onto the treatment table, cradling her right arm.

AMANDA
Local theatre group has been
rehearsing in the library's
resource room for the Ides of March
Shakespeare Festival.

She glances at the wall clock, winces and rubs her temple.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
I was going to try out for a bit
part, but we're supposed to be
leaving for Colorado.

The Doctor comes over and stands before her.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
We're almost done, Amanda. I'd just
like to ask you a few questions.

AMANDA
Get on with it... I really need to
lie down.

The Doctor studies her for a long moment.

Amanda widens her eyes at him and shrugs.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Any time now, Doc.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
Can you tell me today's date?

AMANDA
Three days after Halloween. That
would be November third.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
Who is the governor?

AMANDA
Baker... don't recall his first
name.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

Can you tell me a current event?
Something going on in the news?

AMANDA

Haven't watched the news in a few days.

(long pause)

There was a school shooting last week... in Texas. Some psycho thought the local high school was infested with blood-sucking demons. I don't remember how many he killed - no, he only wounded the sidewalk crossing guard before some local redneck shot him dead.

(beat)

Thank God for rednecks.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

What's twenty times thirty?

She knits her eyebrows in thought for a few moments.

AMANDA

Five hundred.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

Don't put all your eggs in one basket. What does that phrase mean?

AMANDA

Keep your options open. Stuff some money away in a secret safe deposit box... in case your husband runs off to Vegas with a Native American meth-head skank.

Michael coughs and looks down at the floor.

Without missing a beat, the Doctor pulls out a pair of reading glasses and holds them up in front of Amanda's face.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

What are these?

Amanda pauses for a long moment, squinting at the glasses, her eyebrows knitted in thought.

AMANDA

They're... what do you call them... glasses.

Holding the glasses in front of her face, the Doctor taps one of the lenses.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
What part of the glasses is this?

Amanda pauses again, squinting at the glasses.

AMANDA
That would be the glass part you see through.
(annoyed snort)
Is all this bullshit necessary? I just need something for the pain.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
Almost done, Amanda. Bear with me just a bit longer.

The Doctor stuffs the glasses back into his shirt pocket.

DOCTOR HAMMOND (CONT'D)
Apple, pear, peach - what are they?

AMANDA
What are they?

DOCTOR HAMMOND
How would you categorize them?

AMANDA
Food.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
Can you be more specific?

AMANDA
Why?

DOCTOR HAMMOND
Bed, table, chair.

AMANDA
You want me to categorize them?

DOCTOR HAMMOND
Yes, please.

AMANDA
They go in your fucking house.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
(smiling)
Yes, they do.

AMANDA

I really need to lie down.

The Doctor steps back, pulls a prescription pad from his coat pocket.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

How have you been sleeping, Amanda?

AMANDA

How do you think?

MICHAEL

First night home, she was sleepwalking. Woke up very scared and confused.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

(casually, while he writes on the script pad)

Are you hearing any voices while awake, Amanda?

AMANDA

(under her breath)

Besides the one telling me to slit my wrists?

The Doctor looks up, eyebrows raised.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

Are you having thoughts about hurting yourself?

AMANDA

No. That was a joke.
(lets out an embarrassed snort)

Bad joke... sorry.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

What have you been taking for pain?

AMANDA

Mostly Tylenol.

She looks to Michael.

MICHAEL

Yesterday, I gave her Percocet. Had an old bottle left over from a work injury.

(beat)

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

The headache and arm pain, they were so bad. I almost took her back to the hospital.

The Doctor nods, his expression turning firm.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

From now on, Amanda, we want to avoid narcotics, as well as alcohol, or any other substances that might compromise your mental status. You can take the Motrin and Tylenol.

(beat)

Again, I strongly urge you to try the anticonvulsant I prescribed when you left the hospital. It should help with the nerve pain. And I'm going to write you a new script for a low dose benzodiazepine, a minor tranquilizer, to help you relax and sleep.

Amanda slips down off the treatment table.

AMANDA

Where are my fucking clothes?

MICHAEL

Are we all set, Doctor?

DOCTOR HAMMOND

I'm going to have my medical assistant, Suki, take Amanda down the hall for an EKG. While she's gone, Michael, I'd like you to come into my office for a few minutes to review Amanda's medications, and I want to make an appointment to see her in one week.

Amanda huffs and rolls her eyes.

The Doctor gives Amanda a warm, understanding smile.

DOCTOR HAMMOND (CONT'D)

The EKG should only take, at most, ten minutes, Amanda. Then you'll be on your way. Thank you for your cooperation.

INT. DOCTOR HAMMOND'S OFFICE - SHORT WHILE LATER

Doctor Hammond sits behind his desk, browsing Amanda's medical records on his laptop.

Michael sits across from him, appearing anxious.

MICHAEL
So what's up?

The Doctor browses her medical records.

DOCTOR HAMMOND
I'd like to send Amanda over to the hospital on Friday for an MRI.

Michael looks away for a moment, flustered, then looks at the Doctor.

MICHAEL
(hopefully)
Of her arm?

DOCTOR HAMMOND
Her brain.

The Doctor closes the laptop, leans back in his chair.

MICHAEL
I thought her CT scan looked good?

DOCTOR HAMMOND
Her CT scan appears unremarkable.
But I want to take a closer look.
(beat)
Unlike CT scans, which use X-rays, MRI scans use powerful magnetic fields and radio frequency pulses to produce more detailed pictures of the cerebral tissues.

MICHAEL
What are you looking for?

DOCTOR HAMMOND
Well, most of the concerning signs and symptoms she's displaying are typical of general brain trauma. Headaches, irritability, anxiety, distractibility, attention deficit, poor sleep. These are all quite common in moderate to severe brain trauma, and, in the less severe cases, usually transient.

The Doctor pauses, giving Michael time to digest this.

MICHAEL

So what's the problem?

DOCTOR HAMMOND

During her neurological exam, she appeared to display signs suggestive for damage to a specific area of her brain.

MICHAEL

What area is that?

DOCTOR HAMMOND

The area above her right ear, where she suffered the brunt of the lightning strike. Her temporal lobe.

MICHAEL

I don't understand. I thought the CT scan showed...

DOCTOR HAMMOND

During her neurological exam, she was having some difficulty identifying and categorizing objects. Has she had any difficulty remembering songs or discriminating melodies? Or difficulty recognizing drawings and faces?

MICHAEL

She's definitely having trouble with faces and songs.

(turning pale)

You think she suffered permanent brain damage?

DOCTOR HAMMOND

Quite honestly, Michael, until we see the MRI and she has fully recovered from the initial brain trauma, I won't be able to make an accurate diagnosis. She seems to be displaying some personality changes, loss of inhibition, and lability.

(MORE)

DOCTOR HAMMOND (CONT'D)

These are all things one might see with a temporal injury as well, but she's also been under a tremendous amount of stress, her sleep has been poor, and, of course, you've been giving her narcotics. The narcotics alone are enough to significantly disinhibit her, and may account for some of her cognitive and behavioral changes.

Michael lets out a heavy sigh, drops his head onto his chest.

DOCTOR HAMMOND (CONT'D)

I still maintain, Michael, considering the nature of her injury, Amanda is extremely lucky. I have a former colleague at Harvard who published a world-renowned paper on temporal lobe injuries. For some, the lingering effects can be quite profound and debilitating. Everything from perseveration speech, hyperphagia, and hyper-oral behaviors, to severe paranoia and hyper-religious behaviors, to aggressive rages and bizarre hyper-sexual behaviors. There was even one very rare case of temporal-injury-induced transvestism.

Michael looks up, opens his mouth to speak, but, at a loss for words, just lets out another sigh.

The Doctor offers a tired, sympathetic smile.

DOCTOR HAMMOND (CONT'D)

The human brain is the most complex structure in the universe. One hundred billion neurons, firing away in an almost infinite network of pathways and junctions. Our brains form a million new connections for every second of our lives. When some of those connections are damaged, the effects can be quite unpredictable and strange, to say the least.

Michael looks out the window.

MICHAEL

Just tell me what I need to do.
Whatever it takes.

DOCTOR HAMMOND

It's going to take time, Michael.
One thing I've learned over my
forty-plus-years of practice, these
things take time.

EXT. HOME - LATER

As soon as Michael's truck stops in the driveway, Amanda gets out.

Appearing tired and irritable, cradling her right arm, not bothering to shut the truck door, she goes into the house.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - LATER

Michael sits on the bed beside Amanda, who has curled up under the blankets. He sets two pill bottles and a glass of water on the bedside table, then stares at her for a long moment.

MICHAEL

(gently)
Amanda?

AMANDA

(irritable)
What?

MICHAEL

(gently)
You should take the pills. They'll
help with the pain... help you
sleep.

Amanda huffs, and sits up in bed.

AMANDA

(annoyed)
Just give them to me.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael awakens with a start.

His phone on the bedside table reads 3 a.m.

Outside, the wind howls like a pit of screaming demons, rattling the old windows.

Amanda is gone.

Rubbing his sleepy eyes, Michael drags himself out of bed.

INT. HOME - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Michael steps into the hallway as Dina comes skittering up the stairs like a bat out of hell.

When he reaches the top of the stairs he hears a young girl chanting faintly downstairs.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Michael walks through the dark living room, the chanting becoming louder.

He stops at the kitchen archway and peers into the dimly lit kitchen.

Over in the shadows, Amanda, in her bra and panties, sits hunched on the floor in front of the antique wall phone.

Rocking back and forth slowly, her skin beaded with sweat, she stares up at the phone, raking her fingernails across her right forearm while she chants in a young girl's voice.

AMANDA

Take away the anger, fear, pain,
and sorrow... cradle me to sleep in
the arms of God...

Take away the anger, fear, pain,
and sorrow... cradle me to sleep in
the arms of God...

Take away the anger, fear, pain,
and sorrow... cradle me to sleep in
the arms of God...

Inhaling a sharp breath, she goes silent, then slowly rises to her feet.

She lifts the earpiece off the hook with her right hand, brings it to her right ear, then slowly dials the phone with her left hand.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Michael slowly comes up behind Amanda as she dials the phone.

He stops a few feet away, glances at the phone's cut and capped wires, his expression worried and confused.

Amanda's right forearm is covered in scratch marks.

She finishes dialing, then stares expectantly at the phone, her eyes spacey, as if she's sleepwalking again.

Inhaling another sharp breath, she speaks into the phone.

AMANDA
(meek, young girl voice)
I need to come home.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - LATER

Outside, the howling wind slaps a loose shutter.

Michael lays Amanda, who is fast asleep, on the bed, and covers her with the blankets.

He sits beside her, picks up one of the pill bottles, and carefully examines the label.

Under the blankets, Amanda sleeps restlessly.

She lets out a frightened whimper, tormented by a nightmare.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - MORNING

Michael's eyes pop open.

Amanda is gone.

He scrambles for his phone, which reads 11 a.m.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - SHORT WHILE LATER

Michael comes into the kitchen. The place looks ransacked, all the cabinets open, food and plates scattered everywhere.

MICHAEL
Amanda?

EXT. HOME - FRONT STEPS - SHORT WHILE LATER

Michael sees his truck and Amanda's car parked in the driveway.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - SHORT WHILE LATER

Standing in the ransacked kitchen Michael dials a number on his cell phone.

INT. HOME - BATHROOM - SHORT WHILE LATER

Michael finds Amanda's cell phone ringing in the sink under a pile of toiletries and old pill bottles, emptied from the open, ransacked medicine cabinet.

He dials the most recent call. The number is blocked.

INT. CHESHIRE CAT CAFÉ - LATER

Michael, appearing anxious, walks into the café and goes to the counter.

The FEMALE BARISTA (20's), finishes pulling a cappuccino, sets it on the counter, then gives Michael a friendly smile.

BARISTA

Hey, Mike. What can I get you?

MICHAEL

Large black... did Amanda come in this morning?

BARISTA

About an hour ago.

(beat)

Is everything okay? I heard about the accident. She looked tired... and was unusually quiet.

MICHAEL

She's been having a tough time.

He looks out the window, scans the sidewalk.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You said an hour ago?

BARISTA

Yeah, she was with that blond chick with the Russian accent.

MICHAEL

What blond chick with the Russian accent?

BARISTA

Don't know her name. She's new in town.

(beat)

Heard a rumor she used to work as a high class fashion model.

MICHAEL

They were together?

BARISTA

They were headed down to Carla's Boutique. She was going to help Amanda pick out a new dress.

EXT. SIDEWALK - LATER

Michael walks down the sidewalk.

Up ahead, Amanda and a tall, blond, pretty woman, OLGA(early 40's), come out of Carla's Boutique, hand in hand.

Olga carry's a shopping bag, is very animated, chatting and laughing.

Amanda is quiet, withdrawn, being pulled along by Olga.

Michael speeds up to catch them.

Just as Michael opens his mouth to call out to them, Olga pulls Amanda into a hole-in-the-wall bar named THE SALTY MERMAID.

INT. THE SALTY MERMAID - CONTINUOUS

Michael walks into the dingy, empty bar as Olga and Amanda slip into the ladies' room at the far end.

He walks along the bar strip.

The bar obviously just opened. The BARTENDER is busy bringing in fresh kegs.

Michael takes a seat at the end of the bar, facing the ladies' room.

INT. THE SALTY MERMAID - LATER

Staring at the ladies' room door, Michael gets off his stool and goes to the door.

He listens at the door for a moment, glances back at the Bartender, who is busy stacking glasses, then cracks the door and listens.

He hears a soft giggle.

Glancing back at the busy Bartender, he quietly opens the door and slips inside.

INT. THE SALTY MERMAID - LADIES' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A dingy, graffiti-riddled bathroom.

A row of toilet stalls on the left. A row of sinks and a long mirror on the right.

A soft giggle issues from one of the stalls.

Michael quietly walks along the stalls, cracking the doors and peering inside.

He comes to the last stall, cracks the door and peers inside.

Olga sits on the toilet. Amanda sits sideways on her lap, appearing drowsy, drugged.

Olga has slipped her hand up Amanda shirt to fondle her breast.

She kisses Amanda's cheek, smiles devilishly.

 OLGA
 (Russian accent)
 You are so shy... like a virgin.

Amanda turns her spacey gaze to Olga, forces a drowsy smile.

Michael quietly backs out of the bathroom.

EXT. THE SALTY MERMAID - LATER

Michael stands across the street in the cold drizzle, staring impatiently at the bar entrance.

Swearing under his breath, he starts walking toward the bar.

Olga and Amanda walk out.

He quickly ducks behind a street lamp and watches them.

Standing in front of the bar, Olga turns to Amanda, who still appears drugged and drowsy, and runs her hand through her hair.

Amanda forces a drowsy smile.

Olga gives her an affectionate kiss on the forehead, then turns and walks away, hanging onto Amanda's hand, stretching out Amandas arm, before finally releasing her fingers.

Amanda stands there for a few moments, watching Olga walk away, then turns and walks unsteadily up the sidewalk.

EXT. HOME - LATER

Standing across the street in the pouring rain, Michael watches Amanda walk up the front steps and go inside the house.

She leaves the front door wide open.

Appearing numb, Michael walks across the street toward the house.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - SHORT WHILE LATER

Michael cracks the bedroom door and sees Amanda curled under the blankets.

Thunder rumbles in the distance.

Under the bed, Dina hisses, aggressively claws the mattress, plucking the bed springs.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Thunder booms. Lightning flashes in the window.

Michael opens his eyes, peers down at Amanda's head in his lap.

She kisses her way up his chest, then straddles him.

Digging her fingernails into his chest, she begins riding him.

Eyes closed, delirious, she rides him faster and faster, keeping pace with the raging lightning storm.

A thin trail of blood seeps from her ear.

She climaxes, then collapses onto his chest.

MICHAEL
(softly)
Amanda?

AMANDA
(whispers)
Never let me go...

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - LATER

Michael awakens. The house is dark.

The wind howls viciously, rattling the old windows, slapping the loose shutter.

The lightning storm has moved on.

Distant rumbles of thunder.

A burst of heat lightning flashes in the window.

INT. HOME - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - SHORT TIME LATER

Michael steps into the dark hallway, flips the dead light switch, confirming they've lost power.

A young girl sings downstairs.

INT. HOME - STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

As Michael descends the dark stairway the singing becomes louder.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

As Michael moves through the dark living room Amanda's song becomes clear: an old sixties drug song such as "Puff the Magic Dragon."

A burst of heat lightning illuminates Amanda's family photos on the wall, giving them the illusion of movement, like an old, jittery, black-and-white film projector.

Michael stops at the kitchen archway, and peers into the kitchen.

A few flickering candles on the butcher block illuminate the kitchen in a soft, ghostly glow.

Amanda sits naked, hunched over, in front of the antique wall phone, slowly rocking back and forth, singing in her girlish voice.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Michael slowly moves toward Amanda, squinting at her shadowy figure.

He comes up beside her.

MICHAEL
(gently)
Amanda?

She looks up at him, her spacey eyes reflecting tiny flickering candle flames.

In her left hand she holds a long, thin knife.

Six, neat, bloody slices on her right forearm.

She stares at him strangely for a moment, then her face softens with a sheepish smile.

AMANDA
It helps... with the pain.

She holds up her bloody right forearm to give him a better look.

Her left hand absently runs the gleaming, razor sharp blade along her throat.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
If you're careful... it won't bleed
too much... and you won't need
stitches.

Michael slowly crouches beside her.

MICHAEL
(gently)
Amanda, why don't you give me the
knife.

She looks at the knife for a long moment, smiles sheepishly, then hands it to Michael.

Michael reaches up and places the knife on the butcher block, then carefully pulls Amanda to her feet.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(gently)

Amanda, why don't you come over to
the sink so we can wash those cuts.

The antique wall phone suddenly lets out a shrill, rattling,
damaged ring.

Amanda stiffens, her eyes darting to the phone.

Michael glares at the phone... notices the wires have been
haphazardly spliced back together.

The phone rings...

AMANDA

(fearful)

I have to answer that, Michael.

Michael grips her left arm firmly.

MICHAEL

Who's calling you?

The phone rings...

Amanda struggles to free herself.

AMANDA

(fearful)

Let me go, Michael.

MICHAEL

Amanda, look at me.

The phone rings...

AMANDA

(panicked)

You have to let me go... please...
I have to answer-

Over in the pantry, glass dish-ware crashes to the floor in a
shattering explosion.

As the phone rings, Michael swings around and sees Dina come
bolting out the pantry door, her hair standing on end.

The phone rings...

Michael gasps.

Eyes wide, he turns to Amanda's panicked face, then looks down at his bloody hand, pinned to the butcher block by the knife.

The phone rings...

Amanda rushes over to the phone.

Michael looks down in shock at his pinned hand, grips the knife handle and struggles to pull it out.

MICHAEL
(hissing in pain)
Holy fuck.

Amanda answers the ringing phone, the earpiece giving off whistling, whirring static.

AMANDA
(panicked, pleading)
I need to come home... Please...
let me come home...

Screaming in agony, Michael twists and pulls the knife out, blood pouring from the wound.

The bloody knife clatters on the floor.

Amanda turns to Michael, holding the earpiece to her ear.

Listening intently to the earpiece, her eyes dart from the bloody knife on the floor, to Michael's bloody hand, to the kitchen archway.

Michael takes a wobbly step toward her, clutching his bloody hand, his face turning pale.

MICHAEL
(forces a smile)
You got me good.

AMANDA
(under her breath)
I'm coming home.

Amanda drops the receiver, then makes a mad dash for the kitchen archway.

Michael reaches out for her as she passes, catching her hair, tearing out a small clump.

INT. HOME - FRONT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Michael stumbles into the hallway as Amanda frantically struggles with the front door locks.

He staggers towards her, blood dribbling from his hand, looking like he's about to pass out.

When he's a few feet away, she rips open the door - the howling wind tossing her hair - and slips outside.

Michael's bloody hand grips the door jamb as he shouts into the windswept darkness.

MICHAEL

Amanda!

INT. POLICE STATION - LATER

Michael, his right hand bound in an ace-wrap, anxiously waits behind a STRUNG-OUT WOMAN (30's), at the bulletproof reception window.

The heavysset POLICE OFFICER (40's), behind the window takes a swig of soda, clicks computer keys.

His badge reads OFFICER GRIMES.

OFFICER GRIMES

(unenthusiastically,
looking at the computer)

Now, this Roberto Cruz... do you have his home address?

STRUNG OUT WOMAN

He was shacking up with my best friend, Gloria. But she moved to California last month, so I don't know where he's staying.

She coughs, scratches her ass.

STRUNG OUT WOMAN (CONT'D)

Can't you just send someone over to the car wash? He drives a shit-box grey Camry with tinted windows.

(beat)

I'm sure it's in his car.

OFFICER GRIMES

What is the Camry's license plate number?

STRUNG OUT WOMAN
No fucking clue.

OFFICER GRIMES
(glances up, firm voice)
Please watch your language, Miss.

STRUNG OUT WOMAN
Sorry, I'm just having a lot of
anxiety right now... and all my
anxiety meds are in my purse.
(beat)
I called my doctor, but she won't
write me any emergency scripts, so
I have to wait like five more days
for my automatic refill.
(beat)
I'm positive my purse is in his
car. My girlfriend told me he's got
a hidden compartment in the trunk.
He keeps all his stolen shit in
there.
(beat)
That's why she left him... He keeps
stealing people's shit.

OFFICER GRIMES
And what's your girlfriend's name?

STRUNG OUT WOMAN
I just told you. Gloria.

OFFICER GRIMES
The woman who moved to California?

STRUNG OUT WOMAN
Yeah, Gloria Gilmore. You want her
phone number?

Michael's cellphone rings.

He pulls it out of his pocket to check the caller, which is
blocked.

Turning away from the reception window, he answers the phone.

MICHAEL
Hello?

No response. Just faint sixties rock music.

Michael sticks his finger in his other ear, listens hard.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Amanda?

After a long moment, a woman on the other end of the line inhales a sharp breath.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Amanda? Is that you?

Another long moment...

AMANDA (O.S.)

(thick, slurring voice)
It's over, Michael.

MICHAEL

What?

AMANDA (O.S.)

(thick, slurring voice)
You need to move on... go to
Colorado... find someone else...
(voice cracking)
I left the ring on top of the
phone.

MICHAEL

Amanda-

The connection clicks dead.

INT. POLICE STATION - SHORT WHILE LATER

Officer Grimes takes a swig of soda and reviews Michael's police report.

OFFICER GRIMES

So, I'm just trying to put this all
together.

(clicks computer keys)
We sent a cruiser to your house,
about an hour ago. No one was
there.

MICHAEL

I was out looking for her. Called
you as I was leaving the house.

OFFICER GRIMES

And she was on foot?

MICHAEL

That is correct.

OFFICER GRIMES

Naked.

MICHAEL

Yes, sir.

OFFICER GRIMES

So... to sum it up, your fiancée, Amanda Labreck, was recently struck by lightning. She was taken to Fairfield Hospital with a serious brain injury. Since she was discharged, she's been having difficulty managing her pain and anxiety. One episode of cutting herself, but no suicide attempts.

(pauses to click computer keys)

She disappeared around 3 a.m., but then called you a few minutes ago from a blocked number to break off your wedding engagement.

(pauses for a swig of soda)

She's also been receiving harassing phone calls late at night...

(beat)

Basically, you want us to locate her, and make sure that, wherever she is, she's sane, safe, and not being held against her will.

MICHAEL

(checking his phone)

That's about it.

OFFICER GRIMES

Well, I have her cell phone info. I have your cell phone info... as well as the contact info for her neurologist, Doctor Hammond.

He pauses, scanning the report.

OFFICER GRIMES (CONT'D)

Now, are you sure there isn't anyone she may have gone to visit? A relative or friend in another town or state?

MICHAEL

She has no family. Not a lot of close friends.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

She moved back to town about six months ago to bury her mom – wait, she did make a new friend recently. Some Russian chick. Early forties, blond, pretty.

OFFICER GRIMES

And her name is?

MICHAEL

Don't know. I just saw them yesterday... having coffee together.

OFFICER GRIMES

Where was this?

MICHAEL

The Salty Mermaid.

The Officer looks up skeptically.

OFFICER GRIMES

They were having coffee at The Salty Mermaid?

MICHAEL

Actually, they had coffee at the Cheshire Cat Café, then went down to the Salty Mermaid... for a drink.

The Officer rolls his eyes, clicks computer keys.

OFFICER GRIMES (o.s.)

Okay, Mister Drake. In light of Amanda's special circumstances – with her recent brain injury, self harm and all – I have initiated an alert to our officers in the field. We'll call you on your cell as soon as we know anything, or if we need additional information. And don't hesitate to call us if you come across any more helpful information.

MICHAEL

Thank you, Officer.

The Officer looks suspiciously at Michael's ace-wrapped hand.

OFFICER GRIMES

What happened to your hand?

MICHAEL
(turning away)
Bowling accident.

INT. HOME - DAWN

Michael walks into the ransacked kitchen. The power has returned.

He pulls out Amanda's cell phone and checks for calls or text messages.

He goes over to the antique wall phone, stares at it for a long moment, then grabs the earpiece and holds it to his ear.

A faint dial tone beneath whistling, whirring static.

He notices the sparkling diamond engagement ring on top of the phone.

He grabs the ring, looks at it for a long moment, then stuffs it in his pocket.

In the pantry Dina crunches across broken glass, lets out an angry growl.

EXT. CHESHIRE CAFÉ - MORNING

Michael comes out of the café, appearing anxious.

He walks up the sidewalk, searching the street, peering into the storefronts.

EXT. CARLA'S BOUTIQUE - LATER

Michael comes out of the boutique, appearing irritable.

He turns and walks up the street.

EXT. THE SALTY MERMAID - LATER

Michael, appearing angry, slams his fist on the locked door.

He glances at the small sign, which reads: OPEN 12 P.M. TO 2 A.M.

EXT. THE SALTY MERMAID - LATER

Michael, holding his phone to his ear, sits on a bench across the street from the Salty Mermaid.

He sees the bar's closed sign flip to OPEN.

MICHAEL

(into phone)

Well, if she stops by the library,
please have her give me a call.

(listening)

I appreciate it Miss Wadsworth.

(listening)

Yes, I'll let you know.

Michael gets off the bench and walks across the street to the bar.

INT. THE SALTY MERMAID - LATER

Michael, sitting at the bar, appearing depressed and a little drunk, winces in pain as he gingerly opens and closes the fingers of his ace-wrapped right hand, a fresh blood stain in his palm.

He downs a shot. Sets the glass face down beside three more empty shot glasses.

Both his and Amanda's phones rest face up before him on the bar.

As he picks up his phone to make a call a disheveled MALE BARFLY (50's), sits down a few stools away, and signals the MALE BARTENDER (40's).

The Bartender is already on his way over with a draft beer.

He sets the beer in front of the Barfly, then turns to Michael and gives him a tight, sympathetic smile.

BARTENDER

Any luck?

Michael shakes his head, then sets his phone on the bar and turns to the Barfly, who brings his beer to his lips with the anticipation of a man who just crossed the Sahara Desert.

Michael waits while he takes a long sip.

MICHAEL

Hey, buddy? You come here a lot?

The Barfly sets his beer down, avoiding eye contact.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Buddy, I asked you a question.

BARFLY

Gay bar's a half mile down on the left.

MICHAEL

There's a gay bar?

BARFLY

Right after Starbucks. Called the Blue Lobster. Statue of a faggy blue lobster out front... can't miss it.

MICHAEL

I've seen the statue. Didn't know it was a gay bar.

(beat)

Do they cater to lesbians?

The Barfly shoots him a strange look, sips his beer.

BARFLY

Wouldn't know.

Michael slides over onto the stool beside him.

The Barfly looks down at his beer, his shoulders tensing.

Michael pulls out his wallet, fishes out two twenty-dollar bills, and lays them on the bar beside the Barfly's beer.

MICHAEL

I'm looking for two women. One is brunette, very pretty. The other is tall, blond, pretty, has a Russian accent.

The Barfly remains silent, sips his beer.

Michael waits a few more moments, then reaches over and takes the money off the bar.

BARFLY

(low voice)

Seen the Blond.

Michael lays the money back on the bar.

MICHAEL

What's her name? Where can I find her?

The Barfly sips his beer. Reaches for the money.

BARFLY

(low voice)

She belongs to Sebastian. Don't know her name. She's new. He usually trades up every six months or so.

Michael places his hand firmly on top of the Barfly's hand, preventing him from taking the money.

MICHAEL

Who's Sebastian?

BARFLY

(low voice)

Rich dude. Lives at the end of Standish Point. In the big stone mansion.

MICHAEL

How well do you know this Sebastian?

BARFLY

(low voice)

Not well. He's sort of a recluse. Heard he has health issues.

He slowly slides the money out from under Michael's hand.

BARFLY (CONT'D)

(low voice)

He owns most of Main Street. Paid for the new Police Station.

(beat)

He's like royalty around here.

EXT. STONE MANSION - FRONT GATE - AFTERNOON

The overcast sky is growing dark.

Breath pluming in the chilly air, Michael stops at the decrepit mansion's tall gate.

He pulls out his phone, stares at it for a long moment as if he's deciding whether or not to make a call.

Sighing heavily, he stuffs the phone in his pocket, then creeps along the gate past the mansion.

EXT. STONE MANSION - REAR GATE - SHORT WHILE LATER

Michael clumsily drops down off the gate, landing hard, letting out a grunt.

EXT. STONE MANSION - GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Michael walks past overgrown shrubbery.

He hears crows cawing.

He walks past an empty, moldy pool. Inside, a murder of crows feast on seagull carcasses.

He passes a smoldering fire pit, filled with blackened seagull skeletons, and continues to a back door.

INT. STONE MANSION - MUDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Michael steps into the long, shadowy mudroom.

One side is lined with medical supplies: O2 tanks, IV stands, and a glass cabinet full of IV bags, plastic tubing, and miscellaneous syringe and needle packages.

He comes to a door, peers through the window into a kitchen, where a large pot simmers on the stove.

He tries to open the door - it's locked.

He sees another, open, doorway further down.

He goes to the open doorway, looks down the long stairway to a shadowy basement.

Soft classical piano music drifts up: "Moonlight Sonata."

Glancing over his shoulder, he descends the stairs.

INT. STONE MANSION - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

A large, dimly lit, dungeon-like room, the floor covered in a mishmash of tattered, clashing oriental rugs.

There's an old, capped, stone well in the center of the room.

Beyond the well, against the far wall, a computer flickers with a heroin poppy screensaver.

Searching the shadows, Michael walks across the room, past the stone well, to the computer table.

Tucked underneath the table, the stereo's equalizer blips gently to the meandering piano music.

In the shadows beside the computer station, someone set up an intricate lab on a long table: Bunsen burners, test tubes, various beakers and flasks, everything connected with loops of glass tubing.

Above the lab table hangs a large exhaust hood.

A large fire extinguisher hangs at the ready on the wall.

Michael walks along the lab table... comes to a blender... a digital scale... a neat row of unlabeled stainless steel canisters.

He picks up one of the canisters.

He pops the latch, opens the lid, takes a hesitant sniff, nose wrinkling at some pungent odor.

A large needle suddenly pierces the side of his neck.

Dropping the canister, gripping his neck, he spins around - a firm hand pushes him back, sending him sprawling onto the floor.

He tries to get up, but his legs crumble beneath him.

Lying on his back, eyes wide, dazed, losing consciousness, he sees the dark silhouette of a burly man, PETER (40's), looming over him.

PETER
(deep, drawn-out,
distorted voice)
Don't fight it... Embrace the
darkness.

INT. STONE MANSION - BASEMENT - LATER

Michael opens his drowsy eyes to the sound of a slow echoing drip, and the ominous da-da-da opening of Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony."

He tries to move - his arms and legs are duct-taped to the creaky arm and footrests of an old rusty wheelchair.

He's parked next to the open well.

Bewildered, he peers down the dark, dripping well, makes a sour face as the foul updraft bristles his hair.

Over by the lab table, Peter lowers the stereo volume, then walks over.

His pale face emerges from the shadows... looks like someone ripped off his nose, leaving two ugly nostril holes - like a bat.

He wears a grungy lab coat. A fat key ring hangs from his belt.

He stops beside the wheelchair, snuffles loudly, closes his eyes for a moment to savor one of the song's intense crescendos, then sets a syringe on the edge of the well.

He slips an alcohol pad from his lab coat pocket, tears it open, then sets it next to the syringe.

Peering down the well, pondering its murky, rancid depths, he lets out a long, descending whistle.

Sobering up quickly, Michael begins subtly working the creaky left armrest back and forth.

MICHAEL

I'm looking for my fiancée, Amanda
Labreck.

Peter snorts a laugh, picks up the syringe, and raises it to the light to tap the reservoir and push out the extra air.

PETER

What happened to your hand?

Michael glances around the room, assessing his dire predicament, subtly working the armrest.

Peter leans close to speak in Michael's ear.

PETER (CONT'D)

Who knows you're here?

Michael glances over at the shadowy lab.

MICHAEL

The police know I'm here.

PETER

(into Michael's ear)
Can you be more specific?

MICHAEL
Detective Grimes.

Peter snorts a laugh, straightens, and reaches for the alcohol pad.

PETER
You mean Officer Grimes?

Michael remains silent, subtly working the left armrest.

PETER (CONT'D)
Met Officer Grimes last March. At
the grand opening of the new Police
Station.
(beat)
Watched him polish off half the
buffalo wing platter.
(beat)
Man likes to eat.

Michael looks at him hard.

MICHAEL
Where's Amanda?

PETER
(coldly)
I need the access code to your cell
phone.

Michael looks around the room, subtly working the left armrest.

PETER (CONT'D)
One way or the other, I'll find out
who knows you're here. Friends or
family. I'll track them down.

Michael let's out an exasperated sigh.

MICHAEL
No one else knows I'm here. Just
the police.

Peter comes around and stands in front of the wheelchair.

Leaning close, he glares into Michael's eyes, his gaping nose holes whistling softly.

Michael turns his head, more out of disgust than fear.

Peter studies him for a long moment, then straightens, snuffles loudly.

PETER

I don't think anyone knows you're here.

He holds the syringe up to the light, examines its contents, shakes his head gravely.

PETER (CONT'D)

You've seen too much.

He moves back around to Michael's right side.

PETER (CONT'D)

People who've seen too much... go down the well.

Michael peers down the well.

MICHAEL

You're going to throw me down the well?

Peter peers down the well, lips curling with a sheepish smile.

PETER

To be totally honest, I've never had to throw someone down the well.

(beat)

But you leave me no choice. If you just knocked on the front door like a normal person, we could have resolved this issue like civilized men.

Michael subtly works the left armrest.

MICHAEL

Where's Amanda?

PETER

If the authorities were to find this place, they'd put me away for a very long time.

He looks over at the lab and sighs heavily.

PETER (CONT'D)

I've been to jail twice. I'm not going back. I'd rather die.

(beat)

Rather throw someone down a well.

Under the bending pressure of Michael's arm, the left armrest lets out a soft crack.

Peter doesn't seem to notice the weakening armrest, and peers down the well again.

PETER (CONT'D)

Apparently, a long, long time ago, before the Pilgrims first landed on this vast, untamed wilderness, the Indians used to send newlyweds to this very spot. They'd pitch a teepee, fuck like bunnies, and drink from the spring. Back then, the water was so clean and pure, they believed it was sacred, that it made young couples fertile.

He spits down the well, closes his eyes and listens for the sound of it hitting the water below.

PETER (CONT'D)

Over the years, the spring gradually went bad, became contaminated with sea water... and other things.

He smiles to himself, lets out a snorting chuckle.

MICHAEL

I'm just looking for my fiancée. What you do in your private basement lab is none of my business.

PETER

Bet you're wondering how deep it is.

MICHAEL

Not really.

PETER

Thirty-two feet, give or take six inches. That's just until you hit water. I measured it once. Tied an old buoy to the end of a rope and lowered it down.

(beat)

Been meaning to drop in one of those GoPro cameras. I suspect there's a few interesting tunnels shooting off the main shaft.

He smiles to himself, lets out another snorting chuckle, sniffles loudly.

PETER (CONT'D)

I'll tell you a funny story. Few years ago when I first moved in, I was over in the corner setting up my lab, minding my own business, when I hear this spine-chilling squeak behind me. I turn around, and there's a huge fucking marsh rat sitting on the edge of the well. Ugly bastard crawled right up the rope. Ever see a marsh rat? As big as a goddamn guinea pig. Ugly bastard was just sitting there, glaring at me with its huge black eyes.

(beat)

I almost peed my pants.

He snorts, shakes his head.

PETER (CONT'D)

Went out and bought a shotgun the very next day. Don't particularly like guns. Too messy. But I absolutely detest marsh rats. Worse than seagulls. And seagulls are damn fucking annoying.

MICHAEL

How do you feel about crows?

PETER

(eyes lighting up with excitement)

Crows get a bad rap. Most people don't know this, but crows are highly intelligent and resourceful birds. Read somewhere that scientists have identified over two hundred separate words they use when they're cawing back and forth. Smart little fuckers live in family groups, look after one another. And, of course, they're highly efficient scavengers. Eat just about any piece of dead, rotting nastiness you throw at them.

He glances at Michael, catches him peering down the well.

PETER (CONT'D)

Don't worry, I'm going to fix you up good before I toss you in. That shot I gave you earlier, that was just something I whipped up on the fly to knock you out, fast and hard. I apologize if the experience was unpleasant.

He holds up the syringe, rotates it admiringly in the light.

PETER (CONT'D)

But, this concoction right here... one hundred percent pure fucking euphoria.

(smiles wide)

This shit's going to light up your dopamine receptors like a Christmas tree. In a few minutes, you're not going to give a flying fuck about a thirty-foot drop into some stinky marsh-rat-infested well. Shit, if I ask nicely, you might jump in voluntarily.

Michael works the left armrest harder, which lets out another soft crack.

MICHAEL

(firmly)

Where's Amanda?

Peter looks up at the ceiling.

PETER

(whispers)

Upstairs.

MICHAEL

Where upstairs?

PETER

(whispers)

I imagine in the castle tower. That's usually where you find the damsel in distress.

(sly smile)

Although, I doubt she's in much distress.

MICHAEL

I can pay you. How much—

PETER

Not enough.

He reaches over and rubs the alcohol pad on Michael's neck above his jugular vein.

PETER (CONT'D)

Funny, despite the confrontational nature of our meeting, I do appreciate the company.

(smiles self-consciously)

Yes, I need to get out more. Come to think of it, I haven't been out since the new Police Station grand opening... when I met your buddy, Officer Grimes.

He sets the alcohol pad on Michael's shoulder, then grips the top of his head firmly.

PETER (CONT'D)

It's because of my messed-up nose, of course. Freaks people out. Especially the ladies. Got a skin graft once. But it didn't take. Too much scar tissue... too much blow in my reckless youth.

He pushes Michael's head to the side to better expose his jugular vein.

PETER (CONT'D)

I heard they make some very realistic prosthetics now-a-days.

(beat)

Maybe I'll go that route. Slap on a rubber nose, hit some dark bar, try and chat up a hooker.

He twists Michael's head slightly to the left, then leans close to speak confidentially in his ear.

PETER (CONT'D)

Want to hear something pathetic? Might make you feel better about your less than dignified demise.

(beat)

I actually got rejected by a hooker once.

(snorts, shakes his head)

I'm sure it was because of the nose.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

As soon as I propositioned her, she pretended her pimp sent her a text ordering her over to the Marriott for some bigwig bachelor party. I give her credit. For sparing my feelings.

(beat)

That was one considerate ho.

Sniffing loudly, he digs his fingernails into Michael's scalp, bracing his head for the needle stick.

PETER (CONT'D)

Now, hold still. Wouldn't want to accidentally jab you in the eye.

Out of the corner of his eye, Michael watches the needle move toward his neck.

The left armrest lets out another crack as he anchors his hands firmly on the armrests and readies himself.

He waits until the very last moment - until the needle is an inch from his jugular - then jerks his face into the needle, driving the tip straight through his cheek.

Biting down hard on the needle, he jerks his face and torso the other way, ripping the needle out of Peter's hand, using his momentum to topple the wheelchair over onto his left side, snapping the left armrest.

Lying on his left side, biting the needle firmly, the syringe still full, he cranes his neck up at Peter.

Peter stares at him intensely for an long, unsettling moment, then bursts into laughter.

PETER (CONT'D)

Holy shit! What are you, some kind of masochist!

Michael spits bloody saliva onto the floor.

He subtly tucks his freed left arm - still duct-taped to the armrest - under his body.

Peter laughs hysterically.

The laughter changes to heavy wheezes.

He struggles to catch his breath - finally cuts it off with a long, loud snuffle.

PETER (CONT'D)

(out of breath)

Well, it appears you have
confiscated my needle.

(fighting back laughter)

Can't say that I blame you. Bet
that hurts like a mother fucker.

MICHAEL

(biting the needle)

Huck you.

Peter takes a step closer, stoops like he's going to reach over and pull the needle from Michael's cheek - but abruptly stops, and backs up.

PETER

(smile evaporating)

No, I can't do it.

(shaking his head)

Nope. No way.

He wipes his hands on his lab coat, looks over at the lab.

PETER (CONT'D)

I'm going to do this right. I'm
going to get a clean syringe, cook
up a fresh dose, come back and do
this right.

He drills Michael with a dangerous glare.

PETER (CONT'D)

I don't have to make this
experience pleasant for you. I
could just toss you in the well,
all scared shitless and crying for
your mommy.

He peers down the dark well.

PETER (CONT'D)

But there's always the chance
you'll survive the fall, then start
moaning in agony, and I'll have to
toss down rocks until you shut the
fuck up.

(loud snuffle)

I don't want to have to do that.
That might haunt me for a while.

(beat)

Definitely ruin my weekend.

He shakes his head, his face flushing, his temper rising.

PETER (CONT'D)

You have become a major pain in my ass. Stay right there. Do not move... And remember, I have a shotgun.

Peter goes over to the computer station, takes a moment to turn up the stereo, now playing Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," then slides over to the lab table where he turns on the exhaust hood, fires up a Bunsen burner, and begins clanking canisters.

Michael pulls out his freed left arm, still duct-taped to the armrest, and starts working the right armrest back and forth.

Beneath the soaring music Peter talks to himself as he cooks up another dose.

PETER (CONT'D)

(irritable, pressured)

Do not lose your temper... You have no right to lose your temper.

(beat)

Of course he's going to try and pull some crazy stunt.

(beat)

You threatened to throw him down a well, for Christ sake.

Michael frantically works the right armrest.

PETER (CONT'D)

I hear you scuffling over there! If you try to escape, I will use the shotgun! One blast! Take your head clean off!

INT. STONE MANSION - BASEMENT - SHORT WHILE LATER

Peter emerges from the shadows holding a syringe in one hand, an alcohol pad in the other.

His face is flushed with anger.

Lying on his left side, Michael tucks his left arm under his body, and holds his freed right arm - still duct-taped to the armrest - at a ninety degree angle, as if the armrest is still attached to its support.

Peter stops a few feet away, glances down at his wristwatch.

PETER

(coldly)

Okay, here's the deal. My clam
chowder is at risk of turning to
rubber, so I'm done fucking around.
We can do this one of two ways.

He leans down and swabs Michael's neck with the alcohol pad.

PETER (CONT'D)

There's the easy way...

He leans closer to inject the syringe.

PETER (CONT'D)

And then there's the brutally
painful-

Michael swings up his right hand, armrest rattling, and
clocks Peter in the face, making him drop the syringe.

While Peter's stunned, Michael spins, reaches over with his
left hand, the attached armrest rattling, grabs Peter by the
hair, and with his right hand yanks the first syringe out of
his cheek and tries to jam it into Peter's neck, catching him
in the shoulder.

Peter falls back onto his ass, eyes wide.

Michael swings at him, misses, grabs his leg.

Peter kicks free, crab-crawls backwards ten feet, then
notices the empty syringe in his shoulder.

His face turns pale.

PETER (CONT'D)

Oh, shit no.

He pulls out the syringe, confirms it's empty.

With both feet still duct-taped to the toppled wheel chair
footrests, Michael drags himself across the floor toward
Peter.

PETER (CONT'D)

No, no, no...

He looks over at the lab.

Scrambling to his feet, he rushes over to the lab table,
where he begins frantically clanking canisters.

Michael frantically works on the duct tape binding his feet to the footrests.

At the lab table Peter tosses cans over his shoulder.

PETER (CONT'D)

(panicked)

It should be right here! I left it right here!

(beat)

Sebastian! You fucking asshole!

Having trouble undoing the mounds of duct tape, Michael kicks and breaks off the right footrest, which remains duct-taped to his foot.

He looks over at the lab, viciously kicks his left foot, trying to break the footrest free.

MICHAEL

Come on you bastard.

Peter tosses more canisters, pounds the lab table with his fist, then rips the fire extinguisher off the wall and, with a furious scream, heaves it into the lab's network of beakers, flasks, and glass tubes in a shattering explosion.

The extinguisher goes off, hissing and filling the lab area with a cloud of white powder.

PETER

(at the top of his lungs)

Sebastian!

Michael finally snaps the left footrest free.

With both footrests duct-taped to his feet, he pushes himself up, and clops awkwardly on the footrests over to the growing white cloud.

Peter has gone quiet.

Michael slowly clops through the cloud.

After a few eery moments he finds Peter slumped on his ass against the computer station, the poppy flower screen saver flickering above his head.

His eyes are glazed over, his pupils constricted to tiny pinpricks.

A thick string of drool slips from the corner of his mouth.

He moves his lips, struggling to speak, lets out a low, gurgling whine.

Michael sees a pair of scissors in the pencil holder on the table.

He snatches them, sits on the floor, then goes to work cutting the duct tape binding his feet to the severed footrests.

INT. STONE MANSION - KITCHEN - SHORT WHILE LATER

Holding Peter's key ring, Michael quietly slips through the kitchen, where the large pot of clam chowder bubbles over, the thick creamy liquid oozing down the sides of the pot and hitting the stovetop with a smoking, spitting hiss.

INT. STONE MANSION - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Holding the pair of scissors like a dagger, Michael slips through a large, dimly lit, formal dining room, centered with a huge banquet table, everything covered in a layer of dust.

INT. STONE MANSION - DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Michael slips through a long, dimly lit, hallway, both walls covered in old black-and-white photos.

INT. STONE MANSION - MAIN ENTRANCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Michael enters a large, formally decorated, entrance hall, everything covered in a layer of dust.

Old portrait and landscape paintings line the walls.

A grand, twisting staircase.

A huge fireplace.

Michael goes to the fireplace, stuffs the scissors in his back pocket, and grabs a sooty fireplace poker.

INT. STONE MANSION - MAIN STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

As Michael climbs the stairs, fireplace poker at the ready, he hears soft music drifting down from above.

INT. STONE MANSION - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Michael creeps down a dark hallway, following the music.

INT. STONE MANSION - TOWER STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

As Michael climbs the spiral staircase the music becomes clear; an old sixties drug song, such as "The Pusher," by Steppenwolf.

INT. STONE MANSION - TOWER - CONTINUOUS

Michael emerges into a cavernous master suite, illuminated by scores of flickering candelabras.

Across the room in front of a roaring fireplace, Amanda, wearing a simple white dress, her hair pulled up neatly, lips painted ruby red, sways groggily to the music in the arms of Olga, who wears a silk nighty.

A thin trail of smoke rises from a smoldering joint left on a nearby coffee table.

Michael stands there, speechless, watching them sway to the music in front of the roaring fire.

Barely able to keep her drowsy eyes open, Amanda rests her head on Olga's shoulder.

Eyes closed, Olga runs her hand over Amanda's bottom, jamming her thigh into Amanda's crotch to hold her up.

A rattling cough echoes from a large canopy bed at the other end of the room.

Michael spins around, raising the fireplace poker high.

Glancing over at Amanda and Olga, Michael creeps across the room toward the bed, fireplace poker raised and ready to strike.

He stops ten feet away from the bed, his face cringing in disgust.

Nestled in the center of the bed, enclosed in a ring of plush pillows, a naked, emaciated OLD MAN, SEBASTIAN (70's), with severely jaundice skin, sits hunched over an ornate bed tray.

His bald skull is so shiny, it reflects the light of the flickering candelabra to his left.

To his right stands a pair of IV poles, the IV bags empty, the plastic IV tubing disconnected and dangling.

An oxygen hose runs from his nose to a softly humming oxygen concentrator tucked behind the IV poles.

He's busy at work, head down, his thin jaundice arms lifting and arranging things on the bed tray.

Michael takes a cautious step closer, peering at the bed tray, trying to see what he's working on.

SEBASTIAN

(weak, raspy voice,
without looking up)

What have you done with my cook?

(long pause)

Hope you didn't damage him. He was valuable. A man of rare and unique talents. Had to ship him all the way from Seattle.

(thoughtfully tilting his
head to the side)

Or was it San Francisco?

Michael scans the bed tray. Three empty syringes. One solid blue syringe. A large ornate cigarette lighter. A small glass bowl full of white powder with a dainty silver teaspoon resting inside.

MICHAEL

(glancing at the dancing
women)

I'm taking Amanda.

Without looking up Sebastian let's out a wheezing snicker, then erupts with a violent coughing fit.

Michael stands there, anxiously waiting for Sebastian to finish coughing.

He glances at the dancing, drowsy women.

Sebastian finishes coughing, takes a few deep sniffs of oxygen.

SEBASTIAN

I'm certainly not holding her
against her will.

He slips off the oxygen hose.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

Excuse me for a moment.

Reaching out as far as he can, he drops the oxygen hose on the edge of the bed, then clicks the cigarette lighter, igniting a tall blue flame.

He picks up the silver teaspoon from the bowl of white powder, scoops up a mound, then carefully skims the top flush with a long yellow fingernail.

Michael cautiously moves to the side of the bed, appearing unnerved by Sebastian's casual demeanor and lack of eye contact.

OLGA
(slurs)
Hello, Michael.

Michael turns to the women.

Olga offers a seductive smile and runs her hand over Amanda's bottom.

Amanda remains passed out in her arms.

OLGA (CONT'D)
(slurs)
Come dance with us.

The spoonful of white powder crackles, bubbles, and dissolves as Sebastian holds it over the flame, giving off a thick grey plume of smoke.

Michael covers his nose, steps back.

SEBASTIAN
(still not looking up)
You should thank me.

MICHAEL
(incredulous)
For what?

SEBASTIAN
For saving Amanda's life.

MICHAEL
Who the fuck are you?

Sebastian finally looks up and meets Michael's gaze, his rheumy, jaundiced eyes so yellow, they seemed to glow florescent in the candlelight.

He flashes Michael a coy, rotting smile.

SEBASTIAN

(secretive voice)

I take away the anger, the fear,
the pain, and the sorrow... cradle
them to sleep-

MICHAEL

(glaring at the bubbling,
smoking spoon)

In the arms of God.

Sebastian removes the spoon from the flame, drops in a cotton ball, then reaches for an empty syringe.

SEBASTIAN

I knew her mother. Beautiful
woman... But not quite as
beautiful... or nearly as
enchanting as Amanda.

He sticks the needle into the cotton ball and slowly draws up the liquid.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

Mom was a jealous witch. Jealous of
her own daughter.

(beat)

Fed her to the wolves.

Michael glances over at Amanda, who remains passed out in Olga's arms.

MICHAEL

What wolves?

Sebastian holds the syringe up to the candlelight and taps out the air bubbles.

He twists off the syringe needle, sets it on the bed tray, then connects the syringe to his arm's IV port.

He pauses with his thumb on the plunger, looks over at Amanda, his jaundice eyes turning misty.

SEBASTIAN

(murmurs)

Love will find a way... through
paths where wolves fear to prey.

Michael moves toward the bed, gripping the fireplace poker, knuckles blanching white.

MICHAEL

(angry)

What wolves?

Sebastian turns his sad gaze to Michael, thoughtfully looks him up and down, his expression sympathetic.

SEBASTIAN

On her thirteenth birthday, her stepdad, Darrel, invited her to poker night at his fishing club.

(beat)

Supposed to be their special night out.

(beat)

She fixed her hair, slipped on her favorite dress.

(beat)

Mom even let her put on a bit of make-up.

(beat)

Wasn't much of a fishing club. Just a handful of Darrel's buddies, local riff-raff. They'd get together every Saturday night to drink and play poker in some rundown shack, way out in Cutler State Forest.

(beat)

All the boys were there that night, at least six.

(beat)

Amanda... she was the center of attention. They told her she looked pretty. Made her feel special.

(beat)

She sat on Darrel's lap while they played five-card stud for pots of dirty quarters.

(beat)

The boys were having a grand old time. Getting good and drunk. Flirting with their young, and very naive, guest of honor.

(beat)

Darrel fixed her a drink. Something to help her relax, make her sleepy... agreeable.

(beat)

As the night went on, she became so sleepy, she could barely keep her eyes open. Darrell suggested she take a little nap.

(beat)

(MORE)

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

Well, it just so happened, there was an old cot in the back room. One of the boys, an orderly at the state mental hospital, swiped it from work.

(beat)

Still had the leather restraints attached.

Sebastian pauses, stares down at the full syringe plugged into his IV port, his thumb on the plunger.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

The restraints came in handy.

Michael lowers the fireplace poker, looks over at Amanda, who remains passed out in Olga's arms.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

She started with the pills, of course. Darrel kept a generous prescription to manage his fake back pain.

(beat)

But then old Darrel hung himself and the pills ran out.

(beat)

She needed more. Something cheaper. Easier to obtain.

(beat)

My Theresa found her one Saturday night, facedown in a gas station bathroom, an empty needle in her arm.

(beat)

Theresa revived her, saved her life, brought her home.

Michael glances at the women.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

(disdainfully)

That's Olga

(then wistfully)

Theresa, God rest her soul, was my wife. A pure and noble princess worthy of this ridiculous castle. We met after the Easter Vigil mass on the steps of Saint Mary's Church.

(disdainfully)

Met Olga online. She's a whore... from Leningrad.

He tilts the syringe back and forth, gently swirling the thickening liquid.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

Theresa took Amanda in, cared for her like the mother she never had. They were close. Shared the same nightmares.

(beat)

Behind these stone walls, I kept them both safe... from the wolves... from the pain... cradled blissfully... innocently... in the arms of God.

Michael scowls, glares at Sebastian, about ready to drive the fireplace poker through his skull.

MICHAEL

You hooked them on heroin, you sick fuck. You call that safe?

SEBASTIAN

Safer than suicide... assuming one uses clean needles, carefully prepares and measures each fix, and mixes in various pharmaceuticals from time to time to prevent too much reliance and ease the withdrawal.

(beat)

And, of course, one must always be prepared for the occasional unavoidable overdose.

He taps the blue syringe on the tray. The large black label on the syringe reads NARCAN.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

She did her homework, got decent grades, stayed out of trouble, graduated high school.

(beat)

Then, shortly after my Theresa passed away, she left.

(long pause)

Part of me was happy to see her move on.

(long pause)

Part of me was sad to see her come home.

Sebastian looks up, tears welling in his jaundiced eyes.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

I'm the only one that can keep her safe, Michael... safe from herself. If you take her away from me, it's only a matter of time before you find her facedown in some filthy bathroom, an empty syringe in her arm.

Michael glares at him, raises the fireplace poker threateningly.

MICHAEL

I'm taking her home.

An earsplitting shotgun blast echoes through the room - an avalanche of plaster dust rains onto the coffee table.

Michael snaps his head around as Olga lets out a frightened yelp, drops Amanda, and scrambles over to the bed.

Over by the staircase, Peter cocks the shotgun.

PETER

(slurs)

Where're you, marsh rat!

He stumbles across the far side of the room, trips over the coffee table, fires another wild blast into the ceiling, plaster dust raining down on his head.

Olga jumps onto the bed, huddles against Sebastian, her eyes wide and sober.

OLGA

(Russian)

Ebanashka.

Michael moves toward Amanda as she drowsily crawls across the floor toward the staircase.

SEBASTIAN

Peter!

He coughs hard, raises a remote to shut off the music.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

For heaven's sake, put the gun down!

Peter pops up from behind the coffee table, his face covered in plaster dust. Blinking his reddened, irritated eyes, he cocks the shotgun.

Michael freezes halfway across the room, crouches low.

PETER

(slurs, blinded by the
dust)

Where're you?

SEBASTIAN

Put the gun down, Peter!

(coughs hard)

There's no need for violence.

Amanda grabs a lamp table and pushes herself to her feet, accidentally knocking over the lamp.

Peter swings the shotgun around and blindly fires in her direction, missing her leg by six inches, hitting the overturned lamp, which explodes like a bomb.

He cocks the shotgun for another blast.

Michael jumps up, and rushes him.

MICHAEL

Hey Bat-face!

Peter swings the shotgun around toward Michael.

Ten feet away, Michael hurls the fireplace poker at him, hitting the shotgun barrel as it goes off.

The searing blast shreds Michael's right ear.

The sound of high-pitched ear ringing - everything else muffled.

Olga lets out a muffled, hysterical scream.

Michael bowls Peter over, rips the shotgun from his arms, then slams the butt viciously into his face.

Ear ringing... Olga's muffled, hysterical screams.

Michael raises the butt for another slam on Peter's face.

Peter is out cold - at the last moment, Michael checks his swing.

Michael looks over at Amanda, who has crawled past the master suite staircase to another, smaller, spiral staircase that rises to the roof. Her bare feet climb the last few steps, then disappear.

Ear ringing... Olga's muffled, hysterical screams.

As Michael bolts for the roof staircase he glances at the bed, catching a glimpse of the grisly blood splatter on the headboard... where Sebastian's head used to be.

Olga's screaming face is covered in blood... Sebastian's blood... and some of his brains.

EXT. STONE MANSION - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Michael climbs through the opened roof hatch into a gentle snow flurry. Blood streams from his shredded ear, soaking his shirt.

The ear ringing gradually subsides.

He scans the flat, snow-covered roof for Amanda.

He spots her on the far side. She's climbed up onto the iron safety gate. One arm loosely hooked around a flagpole, she stares off into the snow swept blackness.

Michael carefully sets the shotgun down, touches his shredded ear with his ace-wrapped hand, winces in pain.

He creeps across the roof toward Amanda.

The roof is eerily quiet. Just the sound of his feet crunching the snow. The falling snowflakes touching down in a chorus of faint whispers.

When Michael's twenty yards away, Amanda's bare foot slips on the icy iron gate and she grabs the flagpole with both hands, barely catching herself before she goes over the edge.

Michael freezes, opens his mouth to call out to her, but remains silent, afraid he might startle her and send her plummeting to her death.

He exhales a frosty plume, creeps toward her.

Her hair matted in snowflakes, Amanda takes one hand off the flagpole.

AMANDA

(slurs)

Michael, is that you?

Michael freezes twenty feet away.

MICHAEL

I'm right here, babe.
 (inhales a shuddering
 breath)
 Why don't you come down?

AMANDA

(slurs)
 Tell me about the ranch, Michael.
 I'm going to close my eyes... I
 want you to take me there.

She unhooks her arm from the flagpole, grips the cold steel
 with just her frigid fingers.

Michael takes a step closer.

Somewhere down below, a crow caws tauntingly.

MICHAEL

I know a secret place. There's a
 little oasis of aspens, about six
 miles from the ranch... with a
 great view of the mountains.

He edges closer.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

First nice day, I'm going to get us
 a pair of horses, take you there.

He edges closer.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

A rocky stream runs right through
 the middle. All kinds of
 wildflowers. Grassy meadow to lay
 on.

(beat)

We'll bring a blanket. A picnic
 basket. Spend the day there.

(beat)

Make love... Make a baby.

Only five yards away.

AMANDA

(slurs)
 Sounds so romantic, Michael.

MICHAEL

We can start a new life—

AMANDA

(slurs)

You can't fix me, Michael.

MICHAEL

Then I'll take you as you are...
love you as you are.

AMANDA

(slurs)

Thank you, Michael... for asking me
to be your wife... for helping me
forget.

She lets go of the flagpole... her body slowly falls forward.

MICHAEL

Nooo!

Michael rushes toward her - his feet slipping in the snow.

INT. STONE MANSION - TOWER - SHORT WHILE LATER

Michael's feet emerge at the top of the roof spiral
staircase, then slowly descend the steps...

...As he descends further we eventually see he is carrying
Amanda, her head nestled against his chest.

The shotgun is slung over his shoulder.

When he gets to the bottom of the stairway, he stops, looks
around the room.

Over by the blood-splattered bed Olga has gone quiet.

Over behind the coffee table Peter lets out a moan.

Michael walks through the room, shielding Amanda's eyes from
the carnage.

Olga lies on the floor on the other side of the bed, her face
pale, frothing at the mouth, Sebastian's empty heroin syringe
stuck in her arm.

Over behind the coffee table Peter coughs, lets out another
moan.

Michael stops at the doorway, turns to survey the room, lets
out a heavy sigh.

He gently lays Amanda, who has passed out, on the floor, then
goes over to the bed.

Averting his eyes from Sebastian's mutilated head, Michael reaches onto the tray and grabs the Narcan syringe.

Olga lets out an agonal gasp.

Michael stares down at her for a long moment, his expression turning cold.

He turns and goes over to Peter, who is slowly regaining consciousness.

When he reaches Peter, Michael grabs him by the hair, drags him over to the fireplace, and props him on the hearth beside the smoldering fire.

Peter whimpers, coughs hard, his already ruined nose a bloody mess, his eyes rolling around, still drugged and out of his mind.

Michael uncaps the Narcan syringe, jabs it into his neck like a dagger, depresses the plunger with his thumb.

He takes a step back, and unslings the shotgun.

After a few moments Peter's eyes pop open.

PETER

Where the fuck...

Michael crouches before him, places the shotgun barrel on his neck.

PETER (CONT'D)

(peering down)

Oh... shit.

Michael waits for him to sober up a bit more.

Peter's eyes gradually focus. He glances around the room, realizes the gravity of the situation.

Michael presses the shotgun barrel into his throat, making him gag, getting his full attention.

MICHAEL

(coldly)

We can do this one of two ways.

(beat)

Option one - ambulance takes Amanda to the hospital, hearse takes the bodies to the morgue, and a police cruiser takes you back to jail for a very long time.

(beat)

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Option two - I take Amanda home.
You make the bodies disappear.
Clean up this mess. Pillage the
castle. Go back to San Francisco.

Peter gulps, offers a weak smile, his teeth caked in blood.

PETER

Actually, I'm from San Diego.

Michael presses the shotgun barrel into his neck.

MICHAEL

What's it going to be?

PETER

(croaks)
Option two.

Michael glances over at Amanda, who remains passed out by the door.

He stands, slings the shotgun over his shoulder.

MICHAEL

If I ever see you again, I'll put
my thumbs through your eye sockets.

PETER

(blinking)
You won't ever see me again.

Michael turns and walks over to Amanda.

Gently lifting her in his arms, he leaves the room.

EXT. QUAIN T BEACH COTTAGE - DAY

Amanda sits in a chair, wearing one of Michael's T-shirts,
looking out over the sparkling blue sea, the balmy breeze
tossing her hair.

The lightning strike welt on her cheek and fern-like markings
running down her neck are gone.

Dina lies on the table beside Amanda, purring softly as she
absently rubs her belly.

Michael comes through the screened door, bamboo wind chimes
clattering softly.

His right ear and right hand are covered with clean bandages.

He sets a bottle of water and two white pills on the table, then slumps into the chair beside Amanda.

Amanda glances down at the pills, stares off at the sea.

AMANDA

How many?

MICHAEL

About two days' worth... but, first thing tomorrow morning, I'm heading over to the urgent care clinic to get my hand looked at.

He looks down at his bandaged hand.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I was thinking I could rough up the wound, make it look infected.

(beat)

Get a refill for the antibiotics... and I'm sure I can get something for the pain.

AMANDA

(staring off at the sea)

No... You don't have to do that. I want to go to that place you told me about.

(beat)

I want to go tomorrow.

Michael reaches for the bottle of water, uncaps it, takes a sip.

MICHAEL

We should stop in town for breakfast. Buy you some clothes. There's no hurry.

AMANDA

Is it nice?

MICHAEL

Browsed the website. Looks... quaint.

(beat)

There's a donkey sanctuary right next door. I guess, part of the program, you get to adopt a donkey. You go over every morning and feed it, brush it, clean its stall. Take it for a walk around the grounds. They're too small to ride.

This brings a faint smile to Amanda's lips. She continues to stare off at the sea.

AMANDA
Is there a chapel?

MICHAEL
Well, it was originally built as a Spanish mission. Then, later, turned into a convent. Can't imagine the place wouldn't have some kind of chapel.

AMANDA
Tomorrow, I want to get up early with you, go down on the beach, sit in the sand together, watch the sunrise.

She turns to him, her eyes stopping on his bandaged right ear, then his bandaged right hand, before turning back to the sea.

MICHAEL
Sure. I'll wake you up early - No, I'll wrap you in a blanket, carry you down to the water's edge. Let you sleep in my arms until the show starts.

AMANDA
We've never done that. Watched the sunrise together.

He reaches across the table and gently takes her left hand, interlocking his fingers with hers, her diamond engagement ring sparkling in the sun.

Amanda looks down at their interlocked hands.

Michael looks off at the sea.

MICHAEL
Our first sunrise.
(beat)
Should be a good one.

THE END